

The Time for Honesty is Now by thegirlcourageous

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Characters: Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, The other Losers are also there, they just don't say much

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Summary:

Richie says a stupid thing at the wrong time. But if he can summon enough courage to communicate even just a little of what he's actually feeling, he might just get everything he's ever wanted.

The Time for Honesty is Now

Richie stared at the now vacant doorway. Behind his glasses, his eyes were open wide, and his heart was beating a little too fast. He rubbed at his chest. It felt hard to breathe. One second ago, Eddie had stood there, in the door. It had all happened too fast for Richie to properly process the rapid succession of emotions that had passed over Eddie's face. Shock, hurt, sadness, heartbreak, anger.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Bev yells, though her voice sounds far. She shoves him hard, finally breaking Richie from his reverie. He touches his cheeks. Fat teardrops are slowly making their way down his face. Fuck.

Richie glances back at his friends. They're all wearing similar expressions of disapproval or exasperation. Somehow, after all these years of being friends, it seems they're still surprised that Richie makes stupid choices sometimes. Says stupid things. And yes, technically they hadn't spent all of those years together, or even remembered each other. But all of them had only changed so much. So, naturally, Richie was still a dumbass. No amount of time could apparently fix that.

Shit. He can't believe himself either though. His lack of filter had gotten him in trouble many times. But he was trying to be better. Though maybe that wasn't the most realistic of goals.

Richie rubs absentmindedly at his forehead.

"What do I do?" He says in a small voice.

It's Stan that answers him.

"You go after him. Obviously."

"But what if—" So sue him, Richie's a bit scared that Eddie won't want to talk to him.

"No buts, Richie."

When Richie doesn't crack a butt joke, like he'd probably expected, Stan's face softens. He gets closer, grabs his shoulder, squeezes reassuringly, "It's going to be fine. Just go."

"Yes, what are you waiting for? Go after him!" Bev says, pushing insistently at his arm, "Just fucking go!"

The rest of his friends also yell different variations of "Go!" at him. Stan smiles at him encouragingly, urging him to go with his eyes.

Richie tears out of the room, down the hall that leads past the toilets and to the bar's entrance and the adjoining carpark. He only hopes Eddie hasn't gotten too far.

He shouldn't have worried though, because when he gets outside, he almost barrels right into Eddie. Thankfully, he manages to stop just in

time. Wouldn't that be great, adding body slamming his best friend, and secret crush, to the wet gravel outside of a karaoke bar to the growing list of offenses? And of course it's fucking raining.

"Eddie!" His voice comes out a lot louder than he meant. He tries again, his voice taking on what he hopes is a gentler tone, "Eddie."

He doesn't reach out though, doesn't touch him. Eddie hasn't moved apart from the very obvious way he'd stiffened when he'd heard Richie's voice. He's still standing with his back towards Richie, his arms wrapped tightly around himself.

Richie's breath is coming out in harsh gasps. He probably shouldn't have run; can't even remember the last time he went to the gym. But it's worth it, as long as he can...explain. Though what he's going to say, he doesn't know. Doesn't know how to explain that...what? He'd been jealous of a couple in the bar, had wished that he could have been like that with Eddie? That he'd then loudly said this out loud when Eddie was in the bathroom? That he'd run his mouth, and that Eddie had only heard the very last part of what he'd said? The really bitter part that had come out of his mouth, the part that had come right after he'd basically professed his lifelong love to his friends and anyone in the bar close enough to hear?

Yeah. Sure. Because that would go over so well.

Yet, he can't take his eyes off of Eddie's slightly hunched over shape, how he was unsuccessfully shielding himself from the rain.

Shit. This was all his fault.

He wanted nothing more than to talk to Eddie, right now. Sort out this mess, right now. He'd lie his ass off if he had to. He wasn't going to push his feelings on Eddie. Not now, not ever. That wasn't fair. That wasn't the type of person he wanted to be. So, however much he wanted to talk, to make Eddie understand, he held off. He couldn't be the one to start. The ball was in Eddie's court. It would be his choice if he wanted to talk to Richie.

The rain was still pouring, but Richie hardly noticed. Yes, his glasses were fogging up, rainwater was splattering up at the lenses, and it would be hell to try and clean them later. But he didn't move. Just waited.

"Fuck you, Richie." The voice is low, barely above a whisper. But Richie hears it all the same.

"Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you." Eddie's chanting now, clutching even harder at his own arms, his grip so hard that his knuckles are turning white.

It isn't often Richie is at a loss for words. But right now, he can't think of anything to say. Well, at least nothing that wouldn't be terribly incriminating, that wouldn't be more revealing than he'd like it to be. He thought he'd be able to lie. But Richie's pretty sure that if he opened his mouth now, nothing but the truth would spill from his lips. He'd gladly tell Eddie every secret, every desire, every painfully honest truth. He'd deny him nothing.

So, for the sake of their friendship, Richie remains quiet.

Suddenly, Eddie whips around. He's been crying. Richie can tell, even though it's raining. Red is lining his eyes. He points his index finger at Richie, jabbing it into the air menacingly, though no words come out. His mouth keeps opening, closing, like a goddamn fish, but it seems like Richie isn't the only one who can't find the words tonight.

Eddie does however look as if he'd like nothing more than to poke Richie hard in the chest. That's probably exactly what Eddie would be doing if he wasn't standing several steps away from him. The gap between them isn't even that big, but Richie can't help but feel like it's impossible wide.

He gulps. Nothing about this night was going like it should. They shouldn't be standing out here in the rain. They should be inside, singing karaoke, like, really badly, with the other Losers. They should be joking, needling each other, having fun. Being happy. Not whatever this shitshow was turning into. If he'd only kept his mouth shut.

Then, as if the fight just up and left him, Eddie lowers his finger. He hangs his head. Won't meet Richie's eyes when he says, "I just don't understand."

What hits Richie the most is how broken the other man sounds. And it's this more than anything, that breaks the dam. The dam he's been struggling to keep from leaking all over the place since forever.

"You weren't supposed to hear." He replies, lamely.

At this, something seems to reignite in Eddie's eyes, a spark that usually Richie would rise up to meet, but right now, all he can do is shrink away from it.

"Is that supposed be better somehow? Is this a joke to you? Am I a joke to you?"

"No—No, of course not!"

"Then explain, because I don't fucking get it. I don't get you. I hate that. Because I always thought I understood you. That you understood me." He runs a hand absentmindedly through his hair, tugging at it, "I keep running through these last couple of months in my mind. I've been here. I've been trying..." But Eddie cuts himself off.

Richie stares at him. What?

Eddie glances at him, but what he apparently sees when he looks at Richie makes his face fall even more.

"Fucking great," He mutters to himself, "Of course."

And he sounds so disappointed.

"Eddie," He says. But where does he start? What does Eddie want to hear?

“Don’t, Rich.” Eddie holds up a hand, “It was my mistake. I was being stupid. So incredibly stupid. And I shouldn’t have listened to Bev.”

Now, this get Richie’s attention, “What did Bev say?” Because what the fuck.

Eddie clamps his lips shut, a stubborn look on his face that Richie knows well. There is very little Eddie’s kept from Richie over the years. Eddie’s always been very honest, almost to a fault, had never really wanted to hold back anything. But every time there was something, he’d make that same face. And suddenly, the gears in Richie’s brain start moving. Their movement is sluggish but at least they’re trying. He needs more information.

“What did Bev say?” He repeats.

He’s getting water in his eyes, but it’s of little consequence. Because something’s going on here, something that Richie should be able to figure. Feels like the answer should be on the tip of his tongue. But when he tries to snatch at the edges of half-formed thoughts, they disintegrate between his fingers. They’re like clouds, impossible to hold onto.

“Nothing.” Eddie grinds out, visibly trying to reign in his temper, “Forget. It.”

“I can’t!” Riche feels like he might be yelling but he’s not sure.

“Let. It. Go.”

But Richie can't let it go. So, he pokes the bear.

“I don't want to! What the hell did B—” He doesn't get farther than that before Eddie explodes.

“Was it so hard to just let me down gently, you absolute bastard?” Eddie shouts at him, “If you thought I was such a bother, if you hated” Eddie voice hitches on the word hate, but he keeps going, “that I was here, you should have just said so. I completely changed my whole life to move out here, to be closer to you. And I know you didn't ask me to do that, but you think it's ok to just shit all over that? You think it's funny, right? Eddie likes me, let's all just laugh at him when he's not there. You're such an asshole!”

He's shaking, and it's no longer because the cold rainwater has soaked through his shirt. No, Eddie is trembling with barely contained rage. His face is red, his anger almost a tangible thing.

The words that were forming in Richie's mouth die. Richie considers the possibility that he might be having a stroke. But he doesn't think so. Eddie likes him?

No. Too big a question to wrap his mind around.

Instead, he too thinks back on the last couple of months. Thinks of how relieved he'd been when Eddie had showed up on his doorstep just a week after they'd all left Derry and gone their separate ways. They'd set up a group chat, because they all had lives they had to get back to. There was no way of getting around that. So, Richie had said goodbye with a heavy heart, not sure when he'd see any of his friends again.

He remembers how great it had been to spend all that time together. How happy he'd been. Just hanging out, making up for lost time. Sleepy mornings at the kitchen table, eating dinners they'd cooked together, watching tv on the sofa sat so close together that Richie could imagine that they were actually together, talking all the time about anything and everything. Richie had even fucking enjoyed all the cleaning they'd done, because of course, Eddie was still just as concerned with keeping things clean all these years later, and he didn't really trust that Richie had cleaned properly before his arrival.

He'd enjoyed it all. Every single moment. Had kept avoiding asking when Eddie was leaving, didn't want any of it to go away as suddenly as he'd gotten it back. He'd been so very happy that Eddie was there to begin with, and too scared to want to know when it would inevitably end. Didn't want to know what day he'd be alone again. He wasn't sure what would happen to him when Eddie would eventually come to his senses and leave, go start leading the life Richie knew was waiting for him out there somewhere. The life Eddie for sure deserved after all the shit he'd had to go through.

What could he say, he'd loved doing all that domestic shit. And if that wasn't enough, he'd run all his new material by Eddie, told him every new joke, had wanted to make sure they didn't suck, and he trusted Eddie to tell him if they did. He hadn't even been scared, because come on, it was Eddie. He trusted Eddie with his life. And... Oh.

Maybe he'd been wrong? Maybe Eddie didn't want to leave. But why was he so scared now? He'd already established that Eddie makes him feel safe. Richie 100% trusted that he wouldn't hurt him. Yet...

He breathes in, then says, "I suck at being brave, man. You know this." Eddie doesn't laugh, and Richie hates this. He soldiers on, "But, I'm going to be brave for you."

Eddie cautiously raises his eyes, meets Richie's gaze. And Richie feels a little braver for it.

"I wasn't rejecting you." It seems like a good place to start. Eddie looks ready to interject, so Richie speaks again, "There is no world out there in any universe where Richie Tozier would ever reject Eddie Kaspbrak. There's just no way."

Richie really hates wearing his heart on his sleeve. It's like asking to get hurt. But Eddie won't hurt him. That's not the time type of person he is. He wishes he'd remembered this earlier.

"Yeah, ok, so I wasn't rejecting you. I was just...jealous. Fuck, it sounds so dumb to say that out loud. But I was jealous of this couple in the bar. They were hanging all over each other, kissing and whispering in each other's ears and giggling and they looked so fucking happy, and my heart hurt just looking at them. Before I knew it, I was overwhelmed by this feeling that I would never be able to act like that, because there is just one person that I would want to act that disgustingly lovey-dovey with, and he wasn't available. He was married."

Even Richie can hear the bitterness in his own voice when he says the word married. God, he's got issues. He slides his fingers underneath his glasses, rubs at his eyes, "And it just fucking sucked, alright. I'm already in my forties and I've been in love with the same guy for over 27 fucking years. Even when I forgot, I couldn't forget this feeling completely. No one could ever measure up. And I couldn't understand why. Was I just some unlovable freak who couldn't love anybody? Because everybody's got at least one person, right? One person that's supposed to gel with them, be on the same wavelength or whatever? And here I was, and no one fit. Ever. And then I saw you in that restaurant. It was like my eyes were finally open again. I was like holy shit! There he is. That's who I've been missing, who I've been looking for. That's MY person. But in the same moment that I remembered that, I also remembered something else. That us being together was impossible. That it was only me. It was only ever me who felt like this, felt that we were meant to be. And then you had a fucking wife, and it just cinched it for me. I had to bury these feelings. Not look at them, not touch them, not think about them. We survived so much crap that weekend, and by some fucking miracle none of us died. We all left and I was so miserable because I was alone again. And then suddenly, you were standing there on my doorstep. Just standing there, a small shit eating grin on your face, asking if you could come in. And I couldn't breathe. I was so deliriously happy. In some small way, you had chosen me. And the longer you stayed, the more I wanted you to stay forever."

Eddie's just staring at him like's never seen him before. And maybe he's never seen this version of Richie before. The emotional, vulnerable, honest Richie. He doesn't come out very often.

"So, I did what I always do." Richie continues, "I tried to get rid of the heavy feeling in my chest the only way I know how. Humor." Richie pauses, "It doesn't make it better; I know that. But you weren't supposed to hear me. And it wasn't because I was talking about you. The comment had nothing to do with you. Maybe indirectly but not the point. It was about...me. The guy with the pathetic feelings leaking all over the goddamn place is me. It was about how pathetic I

was for not being able to keep my feelings to myself. Because, most days, it's all I can do to not blurt them out. And I keep having really sappy, foolish, selfish thoughts about how I want you to protect my heart. That I want to protect your heart. I've spent so many years just wanting to be loved by you." Richie laughs to himself, "I even want to help you clean the fucking bathroom. Because that type of shit is important to you. God, what's wrong with me?"

Richie doesn't dare look at Eddie now. He's bared it all. And despite what Eddie had said before, Richie has no idea how he'll respond. Now that he knows. Now that he knows it all.

"I'm divorced."

Out of all the things Richie was expecting to come out of Eddie's mouth, those words aren't it. He gapes at him.

"The papers came in the other day. I was trying to figure out how to tell you. That...I wanted to be...with you. Together. As a couple." As Eddie says this, he blushes. He might look like a drowned rat, with the rain still pouring down around them, but Richie thinks he's never looked more lovely. "I've been trying to figure out how to say it since we left Derry, really. Bev's been trying to help. Her situation was so similar to mine. Both married. Both unhappy. But it worked out so easily for her and Ben, and I wasn't sure it would for us. She told me that she thought it would though. That she'd always thought that you liked me, you know, back when we were kids. She kept pushing me to say something. Told me I would regret it if I didn't. That she knew she would have. And then when you let me stay, I started hoping that maybe she was right. I really, really wanted her to be right."

The silence stretches out between them, and Eddie keeps shooting him little nervous looks.

“Dipshit, say something.”

“Gimme a minute. I’m trying to process.”

Eddie snorts, “I think out of the two of us, the one who should need to process information is me. Out of the two of us, I’ve hardly said anything, while you were vomiting words just like a minute ago.”

“I had a lot to say!” Richie says indignantly, waving his hands above his head. “You need to let me freak out. It’s not every day that you get literally everything you want! Oh my god! I can flirt with you now!”

“You’re so stupid.” Eddie’s shaking his head, but there’s a small smile playing on his lips now. Gone is the anger, the tears, the hurt. “I’ve been flirting with you ever since we got our memories back. Hell, I’ve been flirting with you since forever.”

“Yeah?”

Eddie nods.

And finally, Richie feels like he can start believing Eddie’s words. It’s not just wishful thinking.

“You don’t understand how much I’ve wanted to hold your hand.”
Richie breathes out.

“Oh, I think I do. You’re not the only one who has been pining, who though they were in love on their own.”

Eddie takes a step closer to Richie. The gap between them is no longer a sea impossible to cross. Eddie reaches out, takes hold of his hand. Squeezes it. Then interlocks their fingers. He takes a step closer, and they’re standing toe to toe, but for once they’re not getting all up in each other’s business because they’re arguing. No, the way Eddie’s looking up at him is far from argumentative. His eyes keep flicking from Richie’s eyes to his lips and back. Richie wets his lips. Eddie’s eyes track the movement.

Emboldened by this, Richie moves just a little bit closer. Now, their breaths are intermingling. Both their faces are wet from the rain, their hair is dripping into their eyes. They’re completely soaked through, but that’s a problem for later. Right now, all Richie can think about is Eddie. Richie leans even closer, rubbing his nose against Eddie’s. He enjoys the laugh that this startles from the other man, and Richie grins at him.

“Kiss me.” Eddie says.

And Richie can’t do anything but obey.

He moves his lips softly against Eddie’s, taking it slow, not wanting to

push his luck. He's been dreaming about this moment for too long. It would be terrible to trip and fall on the finish line. But Eddie licks at his lips, insistently applying more pressure. He releases the grip he's got on Richie's hand, moves his hands so he can hold on to his face. Richie follows his lead. Wraps his arms around Eddie's frame, pulling him ever closer. Never close enough.

Behind them the door to the bar opens, and then he hears, "I see you two idiots have finally got your shit together. Now, get the fuck back inside. You're both going to catch colds. And I'm not taking care of either of you, that's for sure."

Richie and Eddie break apart, both blinking distractedly at Stan, who is standing in the doorway, one hand on his hip and one on the door, holding it open for them. Waiting for them to come back inside and join the other Losers for a night of karaoke.

They look back at each other, moving in synch, both grinning. Eddie leans up and presses a little kiss to Richie's lips, lingering for a moment. Richie's stomach whoops, and he chases Eddie's lips when Eddie moves away.

"Now." Stan says. He's sure that Stan's got that all too familiar don't-mess-with-me look in his eyes. Richie, however, can't bear to tear his eyes from Eddie's face for even a second.

"Whatever you say, Stan the Man," Richie replies, "Whatever you want."

He reaches out and takes Eddie's hand in his. It feels right.

A thought crosses Richie's mind, and he doesn't even try to hide the mischievous glint in his eyes.

"I'm going to woo the shit out of you, karaoke style! Just you wait, Eds!" Richie exclaims excitedly and starts moving towards the door.

"No!" Eddie laughs, "You can't sing for shit." But he follows Richie without a second thought, happy to indulge even his most stupid whims. They both know that Richie can't sing for shit. But it doesn't matter. They just want to be together. Even if for Eddie that means having to listen to Richie screeching awkwardly into a microphone for several long hours. And Richie loves that he's willing to do that. He really, really does.

Knows that he too would do a lot of things he wouldn't normally do if it meant that he get's to be besides Eddie.

Stan mutters something behind them. Richie can't quite make out what he's saying, something about unbearable idiots. But Richie doesn't care, he can't care. And whatever Stan says, Richie knows that he's happy for them.

But more than that, he's got a man to woo. It doesn't matter that he's already got him. That Eddie already loves him. Richie's simply just making sure to give Eddie incentive to want to stay forever.

Author's Note:

Same applies for today. Past midnight where I am, but for sure still December 4th in the US. Just to be 100% sure, I checked. It's all very legit.

This got both a smidge "longer" and more "angsty" than I meant for it to be. But that's ok. And like usual, HOPEFULLY someone enjoys my ramblings. Today's not been great, not going to lie. But I succeeded in writing this, so at least something worked.

Hope you've all had a very lovely day! <3